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‘EVERYTHING GONE’

Eyewitness accounts from inside the inferno

Tim Querengesser
Metro | Edmonton

IN FORT MCMURRAY

Five firefighters talk to Metro about the harrowing scenes inside Fort Mac: ‘And they’re sending us back in’

INSIDE
- CITIZEN ARMY
- SYRIANS DONATE
- PETS IN DANGER

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metro NEWS

Wildfire threatens oilsands production
Oilsands executives fear the fire could create gaps in northern Alberta's power grid, leading to more shutdowns of crude production

FORT MCMURRAY WILDFIRE

Weekend, May 6-8, 2016

Many regular citizens were compelled to help victims of the Fort McMurray wildfire trapped along Highway 63. KEVIN TUONG/FOR METRO

Citizen army wants to help

ROADBLOCKS

Volunteers being stopped on approach to Fort McMurray

Tim Querengesser
IN FORT MCMURRAY

Over and over they continued to arrive.

But it's not only officials who want to help the tens of thousands of evacuees — it's regular people.

Along Highway 63, where abandoned cars still line the ditches, a citizen army of helpers compelled to do something are giving people what they can.

Mike Boyer came from Edmonton on a whim.

"It's hard to sit at home and watch the news and watch Facebook and see all these people struggling sitting behind a computer," Boyer said, with piles of bottled water filling the back of his SUV.

"I went straight to Costco and bought a thousand bucks in water and hit the road."

The police blockade of Fort McMurray hasn't stopped many people from arriving in the town wanting to offer something to the 20,000 trapped at an oilsands camp north of the city.

All around them is a blaze that has grown to an almost unfathomable 85,000 hectares, sending the loved ones of those trapped into a near panic.

And if Wednesday was the day of the monster fire cloud, Thursday was the day of help arriving — from Canadian Task Force Two to endless convoys of police and fire vehicles from across the province.

Some came so far only to be stopped at the edge of the city, and those people made their frustration clear.

"Why do you have the road blocked if you have volunteers lined up for miles?" asked Rob Davidson at the check stop.

Davidson drove more than eight hours from his home in Calgary, his truck packed with gasoline, diesel, diapers and toilet paper.

"There's people down there waiting (to help), there's people over here waiting, and yet we can't get through," he said. "Here we are on Day 11 (of the fire) and we finally got the (Canadian Task Force Two) disaster relief. It's very unorganized."

> "I went straight to Costco and bought a thousand bucks of water and hit the road. Mike Boyer

Soon after Metro spoke with Davidson, the southern edge of the fire that had closed access to Fort McMurray advanced and all people were told to evacuate south.

Tim Querengesser is the managing editor of Metro Edmonton. He has written about Fort McMurray for various publications and has covered western and northern Canada since 2008.

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Firefighters Cory, Cole, Tarren, Charles and Jason took a spare minute Thursday to refuel in Wandering River before heading back to fight the wildfire that is still threatening portions of Fort McMurray. They declined to offer their last names as they were not authorized to speak to media. KEVIN TUONG/FOR METRO

Called back to the flames

WANDERING RIVER

Firefighters speak of scenes inside Fort McMurray

Tim Querengesser
Metro | Edmonton

Outside the A&W in Wandering River — the only place within 250 kilometres of isolated Fort McMurray that you can still buy a hot meal — a crew of five firefighters scarfed down french fries Thursday before jumping back into fighting the flames.

The crew, part of Alberta Wildfire forces, have been fighting the blaze within Fort McMurray for the past five days. But on Wednesday night, as the wildfire grew and began pouncing upon the city's airport, even they were forced to evacuate.

On Thursday, they were heading back in.

"We were like going to bed, trying to go to sleep, and we got evacuated from there, to Boyle (a town 300 kilometres south of Fort McMurray)," said one of the firefighters, a young man we will not name as he was not authorized to speak to media.

"It's just mayhem, it's crazy," he said. "They finally got a plan together so they're sending us back in today. We're going to the airport right now, actually, and all the other crews are going to designated sites."

> **It's mayhem. Everything — houses, everything, gone.**

The firefighter, wearing a yellow suit darkened with ash, said he's felt afraid and on edge throughout the fight, as the flames are intense. He said he's been drinking 20 bottles of water per day, just to deal with the heat.

And he said he's seen this all before — he fought the Slave Lake fire, too.

For that reason, his thoughts on Fort McMurray are even more poignant.

"It's just gone man," he said.

"It's mayhem. Everything — houses, everything, gone. Walmart's gone, Shell blew up. We heard the explosion. We were right there, down by the river. We got pulled out of there."

His boss came to the truck and told everyone it was time to go.

"Last night was a 22-hour day, with two to three hours' sleep if you're lucky," he said. "And they're sending us back in."

DONATIONS

Red Cross sees $11M boost

Aaron Chatha
Metro | Calgary

As fires rage in Fort McMurray, there has been an outpouring of support from Canadians. As of Thursday, the Canadian Red Cross had received $11 million in direct donations.

"We know Albertans are stepping up to help the people of Fort McMurray; that's what Albertans do when people are in need," said Alberta Premier Rachel Notley in a statement.

"The most effective thing people can do right now is make donations to the Red Cross, knowing our government will match those funds."

Notley said the Alberta Government will match Red Cross donations in support of Fort McMurray, and will provide the Red Cross an additional $2 million in seed money to kick-start operations.

"Homes have been destroyed. Neighborhoods have gone up in flames. The footage we've seen of cars racing down highways while fire rages on all sides is nothing short of terrifying," Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said in Parliament on Thursday, calling it "the largest fire evacuation in Alberta's history."

He said the federal government will also match individual charitable donations to the Red Cross.

As of Thursday, the fire had grown to 85,000 hectares.

HOW TO DONATE

Donations can be made through redcross.ca or by calling 1-800-418-1111.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Bride-to-be flooded with gown offers

Steven Goetz
For Metro | Toronto

Élise Boissonneault was meant to spend Tuesday packing and getting her nails done before she and fiancé Brandon Phillippo left Fort McMurray for Toronto for their wedding.

Instead, Boissonneault had to run.

"It happened so quick," she told Metro, describing the flames descending on the city, forcing its evacuation.

With no choice but to head north away from Phillippo — who was working at the CN rail yard south of town — Boissonneault packed up everything she could and started to drive.

The one important thing not in the car: Her wedding dress. It was still at the home of a Fort McMurray woman she hired to make alterations.

"She had my dress and, I mean, that was the least of her worries. I've been told her house is gone."

Reuniting when the southbound highway reopened, Boissonneault and Phillippo flew to Toronto on Thursday.

"We just decided we weren't going to let this ruin our day," Boissonneault said.

She had spent months searching far and wide for her dress, but ended up finding it right in Fort McMurray.

"I knew right away. My mother-in-law was with me and I remember saying to her, 'Melanie I think this is it.' I opened the curtain and she started crying."

With the dress lost, a friend in Halifax and the couple's Toronto wedding photographer turned to Facebook asking for help.

The outpouring of support has been overwhelming, with hundreds of people from coast to coast offering dresses to the bride-to-be.

"I would love to wear them all," she said Thursday while making plans for a fitting at a Toronto shop, which offered a free dress.

The Cape Breton natives will be married Saturday at a small ceremony on the Toronto Islands in front of friends and family flying in from east and west. Some guests won't make it, forced to remain in Alberta to see if homes can be salvaged and lives rebuilt.

For now, the couple is trying to focus on their big day. After, as husband and wife, they will return, "hoping we have a home still standing."

Élise Boissonneault in her wedding dress before she was forced to leave it behind in Fort McMurray. ALEX NEARY/FACEBOOK

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Danger delaying rescue of pets

ANIMAL WELFARE

Hundreds of animals left stranded in their homes

Jeremy Simes
For Metro | Calgary

Help is on the way for some of Fort McMurray's displaced and stranded animals, though the situation appears to have worsened, according to SPCA workers in the area.

After raging wildfires on Tuesday left more than 200 animals stranded in their homes, Suncor Energy and numerous Calgarians donated more than 300 crates so furry friends up north can be easily transported with their owners.

On Thursday, rescuers said they don't expect to conduct rescue operations until Monday, according to RJ Bailot, executive director with the Alberta Spay Neuter Task Force.

"It's still too dangerous to go into town," Bailot said. "We know animals are in people's cars that have been abandoned on the road — they just couldn't take them."

Horrifyingly, Bailot said, more than 100 pooches and pigs at the MacKenzie Boarding Kennel, located near the airport, have been abandoned by keepers as they were told to evacuate Wednesday night.

"It's haunting me. I haven't been able to sleep," Bailot said. "It was impossible for them to round them all up in a short amount of time."

> **We're not sure if their owners are here.**
> Deanna Thompson

Other than being trapped in the city, animals are believed to be with their owners or at kennels located outside town.

Bailot emphasized many residents didn't intentionally leave animals behind. He said people couldn't return home to rescue their animals as conditions were unsafe.

"People could hear their dogs barking from a distance, but couldn't get them because they weren't allowed back," he said. "I just can't imagine."

Some Fort McMurray animals have made their way down to Calgary, according to Deanna Thompson, executive director with Alberta Animal Rescue Crew Society. "We're not sure if their owners are here," she said. "There still isn't a lot of information."

Hundreds of donated crates were gathered and shipped up to Fort McMurray.

The donated crates will be used to contain the animals when they and their owners fly to either Edmonton or Calgary. Flight dates aren't yet set, Thompson said.

The Calgary Humane Society put out an urgent call for more of the hard plastic kennels, after a request for 600 more came in.

Bailot said rescue groups are doing their best. "We learned a lot from the 2013 Flood," he said. "But fires are so much different."

Whiskey, a chi-weenie, was left at home as his owner couldn't go back to get him during the Fort McMurray fires. CONTRIBUTED

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Syrian refugees give back

COMPASSION

Volunteers put together hygiene kits for evacuees

Lucie Edwardson
Metro | Calgary

Syrian refugees are giving what little they have to support those who can do nothing but watch as their lives and homes burn in Fort McMurray.

Rita Khanchat, who, along with her family, came to Calgary in late December as they fled the civil war in Syria, said they know what the people of Fort McMurray are going through.

"We understand totally what they're feeling because we've passed through the same situation. We lost everything in just one second — maybe not from burning, but it still feels the same," she said.

Khanchat recalls what she felt leaving behind childhood memories and precious wedding photos.

"My dearest items, everything," she said. "You can't replace them, and you will be very sad when you lose these things, even more than when you lose your windows and doors."

Khanchat and her family along with other Syrian refugees and volunteers from the Syrian Refugee Support Group (SRSG) are putting together personal hygiene kits for evacuees.

Elie Kallas on the shoulders of his father, Salem Kallas, with wife and mother Rita Khanchat, right, SRSG co-founder Saima Jamal, centre. JENNIFER FRIESEN/FOR METRO

Saima Jamal, co-founder of the SRSG, said this is one of her proudest moments since starting the volunteer organization. Jamal said all the refugees the SRSG has helped are donating at least $5 and whatever else they can afford.

Jamal said since posting the initiative online she has seen many people who were against bringing refugees to Canada have a change of heart.

> **Canadians gave us everything, and we will do the same.**
> Rita Khanchat

"They are now seeing firsthand that they are people with humanity just like the rest of us, and they want to help in any way they can, too," she said.

Khanchat said when she explained to her young five-year-old son, Elie, what had happened, he also understood what it meant and immediately stepped into action.

"He started collecting his toys and items for the other kids," she said. "He wants them to have them because he remembers too what it was like to lose his own."

The refugees are collecting hygiene items such as shampoo, conditioner, toothbrushes and toothpaste as well as feminine products.

They are compiling them into 99 Hampers of Hope (the name given to a similar effort to help Syrian refugees when they arrived) that will be donated and taken to evacuees both in Calgary and elsewhere.

"Everything we can do for Canadians, we will do," said Khanchat. "Canadians gave us everything, and we will do the same."

FROM FIRE TO FIRE

Resettled families flee again

As members of Fahed Labek's family from war-torn Syria fled the inferno engulfing their adopted Alberta hometown, he recalls them staring back at the flames in Fort McMurray.

"They said, 'OK. We left the fire and now we saw another fire. From fire to fire,'" said Labek, 43, who fled Tuesday.

Labek lives in Fort McMurray with his wife and two children. He helped relocate his mother, sister, brother-in-law and their two children to his home in late February. They are among about six families of Syrian refugees that resettled in the city in recent months.

All the families are believed to have evacuated safely, said Amany Darwish, president of The Canadian True Power, a non-profit that has helped some refugees get familiarized.

"I'm sure it will bring back memories for them," said Darwish, who was reached Thursday in Fort McMurray.

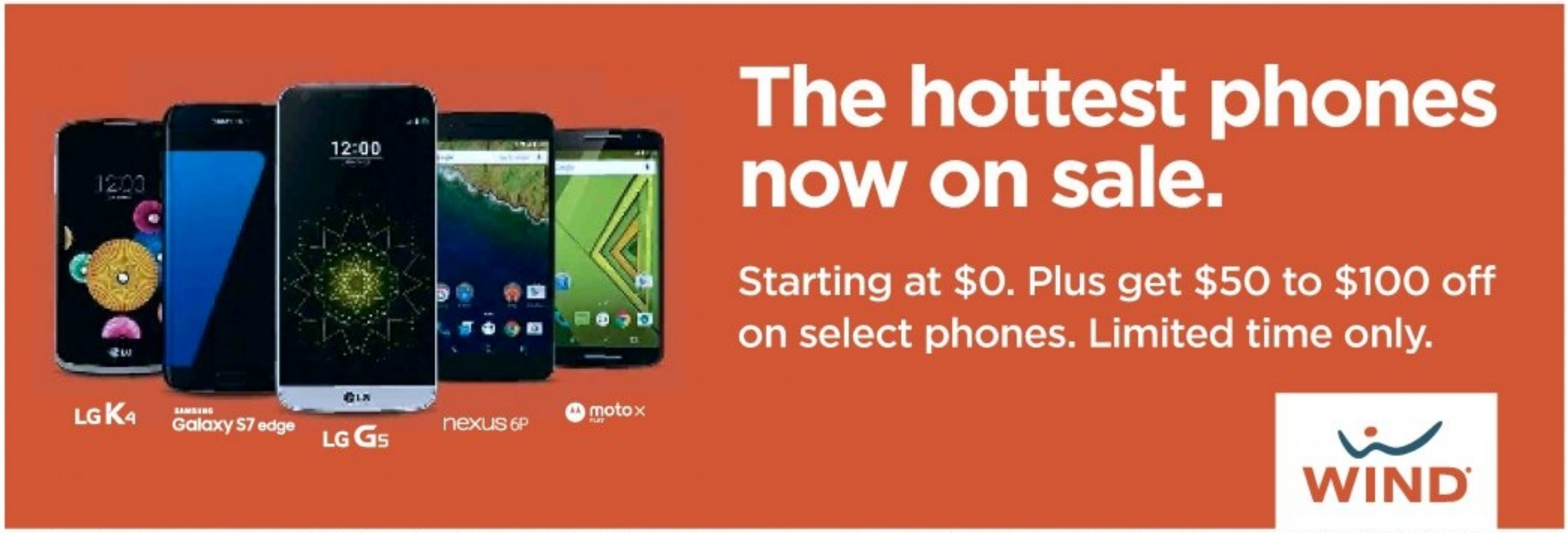
Her group provided some refugees with items to help them restart their lives, but she said "they already lost it again because the evacuation was very quick."

Labek said his family has taken some solace in Canadians assisting those whose homes have burned to the ground.

"What (my relatives) saw here is that the people are very helpful. They can't imagine how helpful are they."

The fire has left Labek with a new level of empathy for what his relatives endured.

THE CANADIAN PRESS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COMMUNITY

Jane's Walks reveal a lot at ground level

Emma Jackson
Metro | Ottawa

What's the deal with all our brutalist architecture, what's a tool library and why, oh why, is there so much surface parking in our most iconic downtown spaces?

These questions and more can be answered this weekend as volunteers lead 48 free Jane's Walks throughout Ottawa.

The annual event is inspired by urbanist pioneer Jane Jacobs, who would have turned 100 this May.

Apart from the popular annual tours — like an unauthorized history of Parliament Hill, — there are nine new walks scheduled this year, and organizer Leigh Thorpe said several in particular are not to be missed.

Sandy Hill and Overbrook residents will celebrate the new Adawe Crossing footbridge with a "pageant" of First Nations drummers, a town crier and councillors' speeches.

Downtown, two urban enthusiasts will target the vast amount of surface parking in the core.

"There's almost a thousand spaces that are surrounded by the best views and they are all empty on the weekend," said co-leader Nico Koenig.

Another timely walk is a tour of the Civic Hospital campus and nearby Experimental Farm, linked by plans to build a new hospital on top of decades-old research.

The walks span the city limits, from the Ottawa Valley Wild Bird Care Centre on Moodie Drive to turtle habitat on Petrie Island.

For more details, head over to janeswalkottawa.ca.

Prof. Chris Fennell with Sofia, daughter of his School of Psychology colleague Nafissa Ismail. He and his fellow researchers are planning to offer a chance to be part of studies at the new Museum of Science and Technology. COURTESY JAMES PARK PHOTOGRAPHY

New science museum aims to be a lab, too

INNOVATION

Children can take part in fun experiments

Haley Ritchie
Metro | Ottawa

When the new Museum of Science and Technology opens in 2017, it wants to bring science to the people and people to the scientists — through a partnership with the University of Ottawa that opens a research lab in the children's gallery.

Inside the "living lab" children visiting the museum could become part of cognitive research studies — but the experiments in this case are fun and games.

"The idea is, how would you like to come and do science while you're at the science museum?" said Chris Fennell, one of the three researchers behind the project.

Fennell and his colleagues Cristina Atance and Tania Zamuner study early development and how children think and learn.

Participation in the studies would be quick, around five minutes. Experiments and studies vary. One example Fennell gave is teaching a child a new word through video and sound and seeing how well they retain the new knowledge.

> **We're going to be playing fun games with kids, which are really studies.**
> Chris Fennell

"We're going to be playing fun games with kids, which are really studies to figure out how they think about things and how language develops," he said.

Based on similar projects in Boston and Vancouver, the new 750-square foot lab will consist of three soundproof research rooms, office space and a lobby with a big window in the middle of the children's gallery.

Christina Tessier, director general of the museum, likes that it will connect the museum to ongoing science. It also gives the researchers a chance to connect with parents interested in learning about how children learn.

"For us it shows the museum isn't just about the past. What's happening today in science and what's happening tomorrow is equally important to our new vision," Tessier said.

PHILANTHROPY

Trebek gets key to city

Lucy Scholey
Metro | Ottawa

The Jeopardy! theme song could be heard outside the mayor's office on Thursday.

But this time, the pressure was on game-show host Alex Trebek. Someone appropriately (maybe impatiently?) played the iconic tune while awaiting Trebek's key-to-the-city ceremony, which started about 10 minutes past schedule.

Alex Trebek
THE CANADIAN PRESS

Trebek received the highest city honour for his humanitarian work and donations to the University of Ottawa, his alma mater. He graduated from the university with a philosophy degree in 1961.

"When I was a student here in boarding school at the University of Ottawa prep, I was a bit of a disturber," said the Sudbury native, to laughter. "I got into trouble a lot in my first year."

Trebek has paid it forward. On Wednesday he donated $5 million to the University of Ottawa to create a Forum for Dialogue — a lecture series and public panel featuring foreign dignitaries and visiting senior government officials.

Last year, the university opened the Alex Trebek Alumni Hall, built in part with a $2.4-million donation from the game-show host.

He had nothing but warm words about Ottawa on Thursday.

"It's in my heart," he said.

Full-Time Nanny

Posted by Marie Thomas, Orleans, ON

We are looking for a full-time nanny/housekeeper for our three children, to start as soon as possible. The children are 17, 16 and 9. The care is especially for the 9-year-old. We are looking for a long-term care nanny to take care of our children and also do housekeeping.

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CRIME

Spike in homicide cases keeps force busy

Joe Lofaro
Metro | Ottawa

As investigators try to pinpoint the motive behind the stabbing death of Lonnie Leafloor, the Major Crime unit is being stretched thin, dealing with seven homicides so far in the first five months of 2016.

There were seven homicides in all of 2015 and 2014, and the spike in killings in the first half of this year is beginning to worry police.

"The Major Crime detectives, to our analysts, to our support staff are really, really busy with this," said Staff Sgt. Bruce Pirt, who heads the homicide unit.

"Yes, it's concerning to me that we have seven by May. The numbers may level out and it may just be an anomaly of the year. I don't know."

Police say in the city's most recent killing, Leafloor, 56, was stabbed to death in an attack that was targeted and not random. His death remains unsolved and police have not identified a suspect.

There doesn't appear to be any direct link in the string of killings and no single commonality between them, according to Pirt.

Six of the seven victims are under the age of 30 and police can say with certainty that three of this year's homicides are gang-related.

"Is there a trend, should everyone be alarmed? No. Let's not be alarmed. We have a great, wonderful, safe city," said Pirt.

While resources are tight. investigators working on homicides are able to draw on other units for assistance. For example, if a murder is gang-related, they can tap into the Guns and Gangs Unit for their expertise.

Even so, Pirt said he is mindful of the overtime his officers are racking up. Four of the seven murders so far this year remain unsolved.

A recurring problem is that some witnesses, especially those involved in crime, are reluctant to come forward with information out of fear of retribution.

But Pirt wants the public to know that they can feel safe in coming to police.

5 THINGS TO DO IN OTTAWA THIS WEEKEND

Haley Ritchie
Metro | Ottawa

More poutine, more bikes and more magic are in store for Ottawa's residents. It's going to be a fun weekend in the city.

1 What's happening?

Hintonburg will be extra happening this weekend — the neighbourhood's nine-day arts and local business festival kicks off Friday. From 7 to 10 p.m. Friday, head to 1140 Wellington St. West for a party. A full list of events is online at hintonburghappening.ca.

2 Poutine, please

Didn't get your fill of gravy, curds and fries last week on Sparks Street? The St. Albert Ottawa PoutineFest will be parked outside city hall all weekend. It kicks off at 11 a.m. every day and runs until 9 p.m. on Friday and Saturday, or 6 p.m. Sunday. Bring cash and your appetite.

3 Magic or science?

Magic and science combine in one show at Carleton University Saturday night. This outdoor event takes place in the amphitheatre between Southam and Patterson Halls. Admission is free, food trucks will serve food for cash. The one-hour show starts at 8:45 p.m., with hands-on demos at 7:30 p.m.

4 Tea for mom

There's nothing wrong with a classic brunch to celebrate mom, but how about a traditional tea with a historic twist? Billings Estate National Historic Site offers a traditional tea from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday, while the Cumberland Heritage Village Museum hosts all kinds of crafts and activities with a focus on Canadian women.

5 Spinning their wheels

The nice weekend weather will provide the perfect opportunity to pull out your bike, if you haven't already. On Sunday, you can participate in a bike parade led by Ottawa's XO VELO. Preston Street will be closed to motorists from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., but open to bikes, skateboards, scooters and rollerblades. The event is free.

QUEEN'S PARK

Horwath angered by 'slur'

New Democrat Leader Andrea Horwath is demanding Energy Minister Bob Chiarelli be fired for comments she calls sexist and misogynist.

Chiarelli apologized in the legislature Wednesday after he was heard saying Horwath "pees all over the map" on energy issues, but insisted he never actually said that and meant to say only that "she's all over the map."

Horwath says it wasn't a real apology because Chiarelli didn't admit he'd done anything wrong, and claims his "disgusting slur" comparing her actions to a dog's was meant to demean and embarrass her.

The NDP leader also says Premier Kathleen Wynne should immediately remove Chiarelli from the Ontario cabinet.

Wynne told the legislature Thursday that Chiarelli had dealt with the issue properly.

The New Democrats claim Chiarelli has a history of sexist comments, pointing to his claim that auditor general Bonnie Lysyk didn't understand the electricity file. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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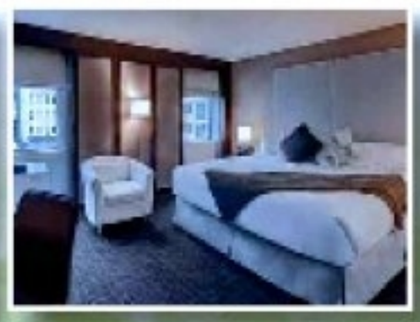

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For full contest details and rules, **visit metronews.ca/auctionrules**

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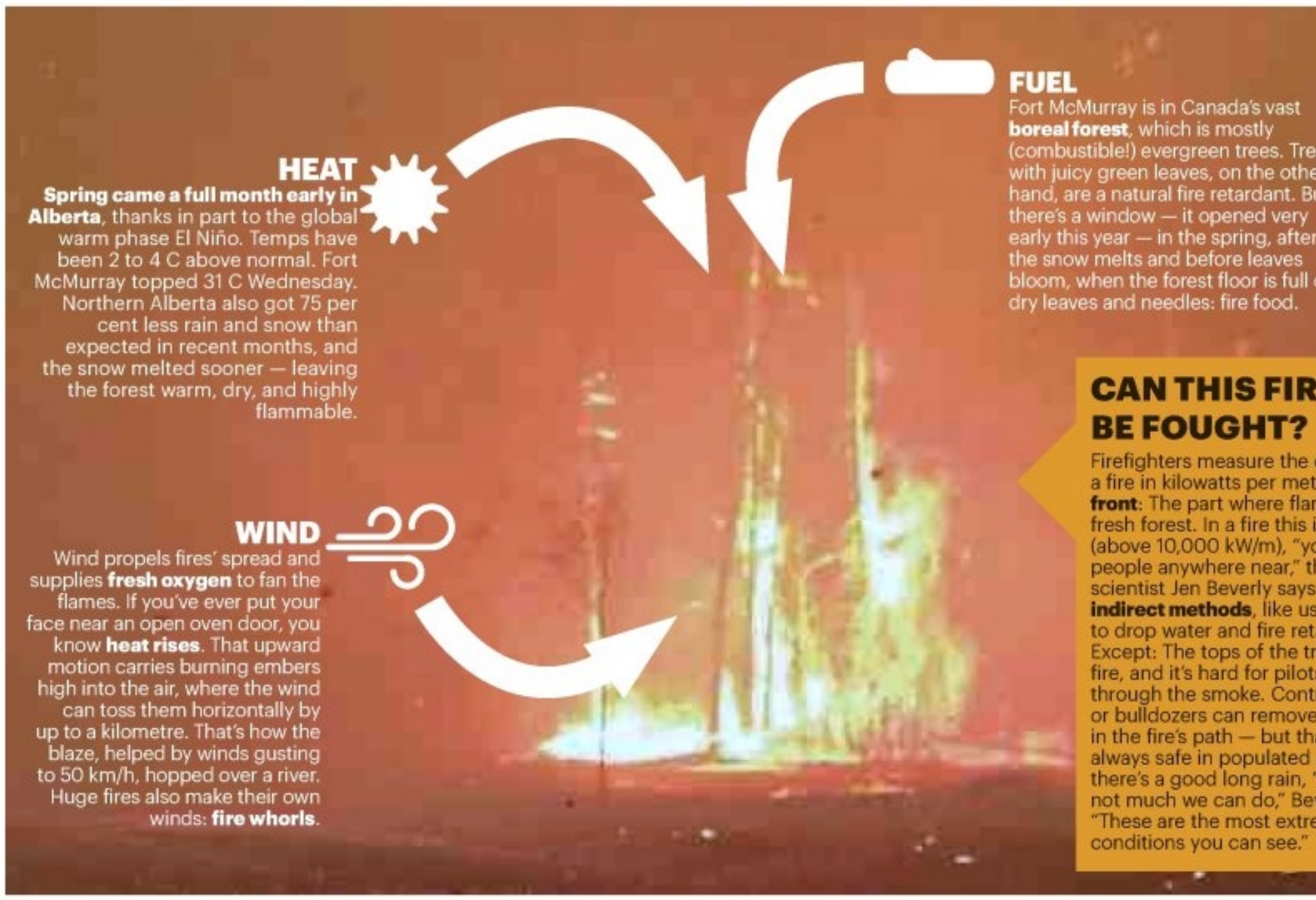
DREAM DRAGONS New science suggests it's not just birds and mammals: Australian dragon lizards have dreamy REM sleep, too.

DECODED Wildfire science

FANNING THE FLAMES OF DISASTER

Forest fires happen every year, and a bit of burning is important for a healthy ecosytem. But this season is different — and not just because **the city of Fort McMurray is in the path of destruction.** In the words of Jen Beverly, who teaches fire science and management at the University of Alberta, this conflagration is "about as explosive as you can get." Here's why.


HEAT
Spring came a full month early in Alberta, thanks in part to the global warm phase El Niño. Temps have been 2 to 4 C above normal. Fort McMurray topped 31 C Wednesday. Northern Alberta also got 75 per cent less rain and snow than expected in recent months, and the snow melted sooner — leaving the forest warm, dry, and highly flammable.
FUEL
Fort McMurray is in Canada's vast boreal forest, which is mostly (combustible!) evergreen trees. Trees with juicy green leaves, on the other hand, are a natural fire retardant. But there's a window — it opened very early this year — in the spring, after the snow melts and before leaves bloom, when the forest floor is full of dry leaves and needles: fire food.
WIND
Wind propels fires' spread and supplies fresh oxygen to fan the flames. If you've ever put your face near an open oven door, you know heat rises. That upward motion carries burning embers high into the air, where the wind can toss them horizontally by up to a kilometre. That's how the blaze, helped by winds gusting to 50 km/h, hopped over a river. Huge fires also make their own winds: fire whorls.
CAN THIS FIRE BE FOUGHT?
Firefighters measure the energy of a fire in kilowatts per metre of fire front: The part where flames meet fresh forest. In a fire this intense (above 10,000 kW/m), "you can't put people anywhere near," the front, scientist Jen Beverly says. That leaves indirect methods, like using planes to drop water and fire retardant. Except: The tops of the trees are on fire, and it's hard for pilots to see through the smoke. Controlled burns or bulldozers can remove some fuel in the fire's path — but that's not always safe in populated areas. Until there's a good long rain, "there's not much we can do," Beverly says. "These are the most extreme burning conditions you can see."

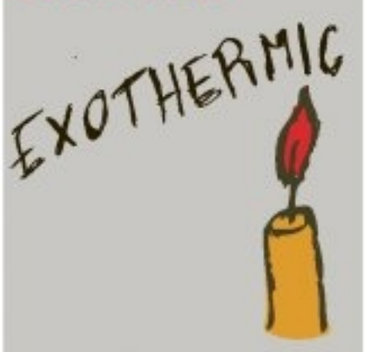
GRAPHICS BY ANDRÉS PLANA/METRO, **TEXT** BY GENNA BUCK, WITH FILES FROM AARON CHATHA, PHOTO: HOLLY AYEARST/THE CANADIAN PRESS

FINDINGS
Your week in science

THE WAY TO A LAB'S HEART ... is through his stomach, as Labrador retriever owners everywhere know. Now science supports them: A new paper in Cell Metabolism identifies a gene variation found in the most "food-motivated" labs. A.K.A.: These pups will do anything for treats, including obey commands. It seems to more be common in service dogs — and obese ones.

THE BEST (FLU) SHOT Babies whose moms get a flu shot while pregnant are 70 per cent less likely to have a confirmed case of flu in their first six months, says a Utah study of 245,000 mothers.

SOUND SMART



DEFINITION
Exothermic chemical reactions **release energy in the form of heat**. Combustion (a type of oxidation reaction), is the ultimate example.

USE IT IN A SENTENCE
Carlos's metabolism must be very **exothermic** — he's a human torch! Seriously, his bear hugs could be used to treat people with hypothermia.

CITIZEN SCIENTIST by Genna Buck

Can I grow vegetables in my condo?

How does science say I should grow veggies indoors in a condo? — Ed, Mississauga, Ont.

First, a disclaimer: Every plant I've ever owned has died in my care, with the sole exception of the withering rose on my desk, and its days are numbered.

I'm used to wading in B.S. (bad science) online. But never have I found more conflicting information, all of it claiming to be scientific and authoritative, than when I searched for gardening tips.

I've learned when I'm out of my depth, experts are infinitely more useful than expert sources. So I put your question to Ontario Master Gardener Cauleen Viscoff. (Master Gardeners are teachers and speakers who've taken scientific courses in horticulture). Her advice is simple: "Think like a plant." Plants need air, light and water, and take in nutrients through their roots. The bigger the plant, the deeper the root.

I'm afraid Viscoff poured a watering-can's worth of cold water on your plans, Ed: "You don't want to be planting seeds indoors and expecting you're going to have a vegetable garden. It's not going to work," she said.

Buy plants, not seeds, she advised, and try starting with a small cherry tomato in the deepest pot you can find. Herbs and salad greens can also be coaxed to grow in a condo, but that's about it: "Most window boxes are not deep enough. Don't expect veggies like peas and carrots unless you have a balcony."

If you're balcony-less, a sunny, south-facing window is the next best thing — but it's a poor substitute for the hours of direct sunlight most fruits and vegetables need every day. And crack it: Your condo air is probably stale.

Beautiful but inedible things like orchids and violets fare the best indoors, Viscoff said. As for most vegetables? "That's what the farmers' market is for."

Science Question? Tweet @genna_buck

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She stands by her superhero

CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR

Talking to the love interest of key Avenger

Richard Crouse
For Metro Canada

Canadian Emily VanCamp plays Sharon Carter, the love interest of Chris Evans, a.k.a. Captain America . HANDOUT

There's trouble in Avengers Land.

Like the recent Batman v. Superman: Dawn of Justice, which saw the Caped Crusader and the Man of Steel go head-to-head in a showdown over how best to police the world, Captain America: Civil War sees the Avengers go mano e' mano e' mano e' mano e' mano e' mano (there's a lot of them) in an effort to settle their differences.

As anyone who has seen the Avengers movies knows, the superhero team have caused havoc all over the world, blowing things up dropping buildings on people, all in the name of law and order. It's been a wild ride but after a rescue mission leaves 11 innocent people dead the United Nations decides it's time to rein them in.

The proposed restrictions divide the group. Tony 'Iron Man' Stark (Robert Downey Jr.) wants more oversight while Captain America (Chris Evans) refuses to compromise.

Watching from the sidelines is Sharon Carter, ex-S.H.I.E.L.D field agent and love interest of Captain America. Played by Port Perry, Ont., native Emily VanCamp, the character is firmly onside with her superhero suitor.

"It's an interesting debate," she says, "because there is no real right or wrong at any given moment. It is difficult to take sides. I know where my character stands. I understand that. Because I play her, I get it but at the same time, as Emily, I really do feel it would make much more sense to be on Iron Man's side. That's what makes it interesting. You think you're going to go into it with a very clear vision of whose side you're on but you don't leave feeling that way."

With two Captain America films under her belt VanCamp is part of the Marvel Universe. That means she has a whole new group of fans with ideas about her character.

"The fans are incredibly invested," she says. "There are a lot of people with very specific ideas of who they want to see with Steve (aka. Captain America) and sometimes Sharon is not that person. I certainly hear about that. You have to admire how invested people are, whether they're on your side or not. You have to respect it. I just have to do the best job I can do as Sharon and create the best version of the character and not take some of it personally. You hope, for the most part, the fans are happy."

The 29-year-old actress began performing in dance class when she was just three years old.

"There were a lot of us in my family so it was a way to tire us out," she laughs. "It was an outlet to run around which then turned into more serious dance training."

Those lessons came in handy while shooting one of Civil War's wild fight scenes.

"Dancing teaches you to be connected with your body," she says.

"We had to shoot the scene in Civil War where Sharon and Black Widow take on Bucky, quite fast. We didn't practice it. They were running behind that day and they shot the reaction to getting slammed on the table the next morning but all of the fight stuff was in an hour-and-a-half. I don't think I would have been able to do that unless I had some formal training in dance."

MOVIE RATINGS by Richard Crouse

Captain America: Civil War	★★★★
The Meddler	★★★
The Rainbow Kid	★★★

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★★★ WORTHWHILE
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The Bad Mother makes a good point

COMEDY

Film portrays the stresses of working and parenthood

Steve Gow
For Metro Canada

3 DIFFERENT MOVIE MOMS

The Wise Mom
Sally Field filled her son with optimism and sensible schooling like "life is like a box of chocolates" in the Oscar-winning hit Forrest Gump.

The Protector
In Terminator 2, Sarah Connor (Linda Hamilton) stopped a robot apocalypse while guarding her son from a murderous cyborg in the guise of Arnold Schwarzenegger.

The Mentor
Sandra Bullock won an Oscar for portraying the real mother that adopted a homeless teen and raised him to become a football great in The Blind Side.

Director Sara Kapoor stars in The Bad Mother, available on Video on Demand. CONTRIBUTED

Filmmaker Sarah Kapoor gave her mom a mother's day gift she'll never forget — she cast her in a movie about motherhood.

"Well, I didn't have to pay her," laughed the actor-director about working alongside her mom in the new comedy The Bad Mother. "That was probably the riskiest casting decision of all but we wanted to make the movie (and) it was a way to skip the acting costs and start filming right away."

Kapoor's benevolence wasn't just limited to her mother either. In fact, the film experience extended to the whole family as her husband and kids also appear in the movie of a mom so fed up with an oppressive work-life balance that she drafts up a rant that accidentally goes viral — sending her situation into chaos.

"For women who need and want to work, there's so many obstacles and if you choose to be a stay-at-home mother, you're undervalued," said Kapoor about the spark that ignited her cinematic ode to motherhood. "There's an abundance of incredible research that supports these ideas but there was no mainstream, accessible movie about it. So we took the field of dreams approach and (thought) build it and they will come."

A working mother of two herself, Kapoor insists that the main character she portrays may not be quite true-to-life, but she's a definitely a composite of truth.

"Certainly it's inspired by feelings that I've had. The character Tara is an alternate version of myself," said Kapoor, adding the story's broader message about family may be more profound. "It's about women and mothers for sure, but when you watch the movie, its really about that struggle that impacts the whole family — it's hard on dads too when work-culture demands an enormous amount of loyalty."

A poignant topic that could've easily been dealt with a heavy hand, Kapoor made sure to give the social issue a lift of levity.

"Imagine pitching a movie on work-life balance and child care — who's going to go for that?" said Kapoor. "But if you make it and it's funny and endearing — well, the response has been wonderful.

The Bad Mother is available online at badmothermovie.com

FAMILY BUSINESS

Gwyneth Paltrow and Blythe Danner: The mother-daughter duo paired up in a 2003 acclaimed biopic about poet Sylvia Plath, simply titled Sylvia.

Dakota Johnson and Melanie Griffith: Before she was turning Fifty Shades of Grey, Dakota Johnson made her debut going Crazy In Alabama — her mom's 1999 crime comedy.

Meryl Streep and Mamie Gummer: This famous mom-daughter combo has teamed up three times — most recently in 2015's rock n' roll comedy Ricki and the Flash.

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YOUR GUIDE TO CAPTAIN AMERICA'S UNIVERSE OF SUPERHEROES

With teams of Marvel superheroes battling each other on the big-screen this weekend, it's hard to keep up with just who's fighting who in Captain America: Civil War. For passionate but perplexed moviegoers, we boil down the blitzkrieg with our Civil War Glossary. STEVE GOW/FOR METRO

TEAM CAPTAIN AMERICA

The Falcon Anthony Mackie

Captain America's perennial sidekick, The Falcon takes up with his super-pal in the battle against government regulation of superheroes. A former para-trooper, he uses a specialized winged jetpack to fly like, well, a falcon. An Avengers recruit, he's also responsible for bringing Ant-Man into the fold.

Ant-Man Paul Rudd

After uncovering an incredible suit that enables him to shrink to the size of a bug, Ant-Man now lends his shape-shifting wardrobe to Captain America's fight. The truth is, in the comic book version, Ant-Man was killed off prior to the events of Marvel's Civil War.

Bucky Barnes Sebastian Stan

Introduced to filmgoers as the Winter Soldier in the previous Captain America movie, the now-brainwashed Bucky sides with his old friend. Although he has no superpowers, Barnes is an Olympic-class athlete so skilled in combat he actually took over as Captain America following the Civil War-years in the comic universe.

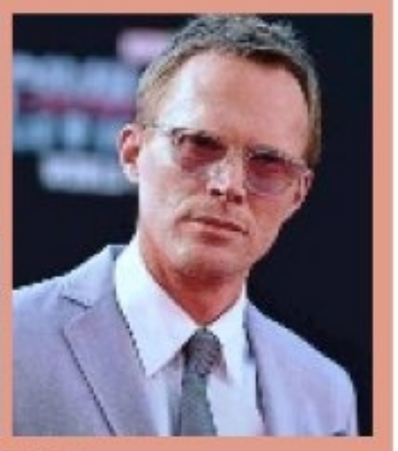
TEAM IRON MAN

Black Widow Scarlett Johansson

Torn between teammates, the Avengers enemy-turned-member ultimately chooses Iron Man's pro-stance on government supervision of heroes. A martial-arts master armed with an electroshock weapon called the Widow's Bite, the one-time assassin has a big role to play.

Black Panther Chadwick Boseman

He'll soon have his own movie but first Black Panther has to partake in a little Civil War. He chose Iron Man's side after the African crown prince suspects Bucky Barnes is responsible for his father's assassination. A combatant with acrobatic skills, Black Panther is further favoured by a special suit.



Vision Paul Bettany

Not your average superhero, Vision was an evil synthetic humanoid that was reprogrammed by Tony Stark in Avengers: Age of Ultron. Naturally, he's taking Iron Man's side and lucky for him – Vision can control his density and even partially materialize within other people, which presumably really hurts.

BEST OF THE REST

The other faces of Captain America

War Machine (Don Cheadle): Longtime pals with Tony Stark, War Machine possesses a heavily-armed suit not unlike Iron Man's.

Hawkeye (Jeremy Renner): Formerly of The Avengers, the expert archer comes out of retirement for Captain America.

Spider-Man (Tom Holland): Who's side is Spidey on? We won't say but he does make an appearance before his latest adventure hits screens next summer.

Scarlet Witch (Elizabeth Olsen): A Captain America ally, the Avenger has hypnotic and telekinesis powers. STEVE GOW/METRO

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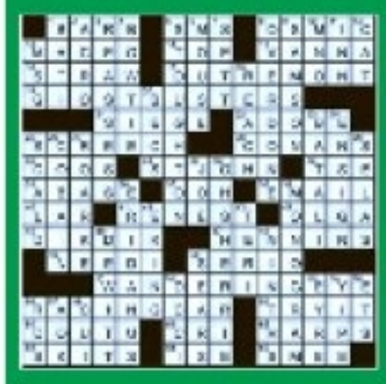
from your daily crossword and Sudoku



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Madagascar's first hot air balloon festival takes off

Five happening summer destinations

As well as beating the crowds and bypassing the pitfalls of mass tourism, visitors holidaying in up-and-coming destinations can also enjoy lower prices. Hot on the heels of Croatia — Europe's "exotic" destination some 15 years ago — here are five alternative hotspots for holidaying off the beaten track. AFP

ALL PHOTOS ISTOCK

1 Bulgaria

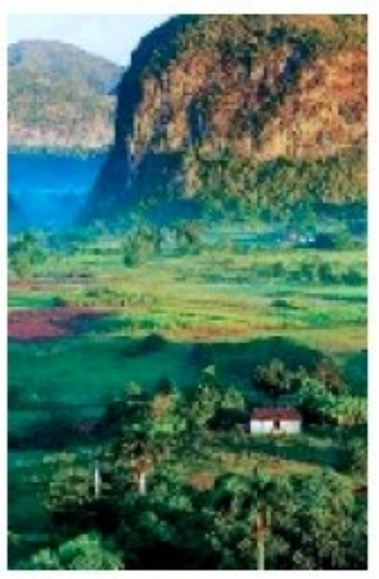
Like Croatia used to be years ago, Bulgaria is the latest up-and-coming destination in Eastern Europe. Tourists can still enjoy low prices with a bit of savvy planning. A flight to the capital, Sofia, shouldn't break the bank, especially since budget airlines now operate routes from some European cities. The country offers postcard-perfect landscapes for holidaymakers thanks to Black Sea beaches and a patchwork of typical Balkan villages and temperatures of around 27 C.

2 Iran

International relations with Iran have warmed since last year's signing of a nuclear deal. Major airlines are reopening routes to Tehran and international hotel groups are returning as tourists head back to Iran. Persepolis is a must for anyone with an interest in history, and budding photographers will love the dazzling coloured mosaics of the Nasir al-Mulk mosque in Chiraz.

3 Abkhazia

The Black Sea is a seriously hot destination in the travel world right now. On its eastern shore, Abkhazia awaits tourists curious to discover this little-known region between the Caucasus Mountains and the Black Sea. Abkhazia will please travellers with a taste for nature thanks to its many mountains and caves, including Krubera Cave, the deepest known on Earth.



4 Cuba

Catch a glimpse of the famous Cuban cars, take a peaceful dip in the crystal-clear waters of Maria La Gorda, or wander through Havana's picturesque old town before American tourists begin being able to arrive en masse, thanks to a thaw in U.S. relations. Make the most of the many salsa and rumba dance classes and local "casa particular" home stays.

5 Transylvania

Situated in the centre-west of Romania, Transylvania is a new alternative destination for nature-lovers thanks to its lush, green surroundings and natural border with the Carpathian mountain range. Transylvanian architecture and landscapes give a distinctly Game of Thrones slant to the surroundings, scattered with baroque-style villages like Cluj-Napoca.

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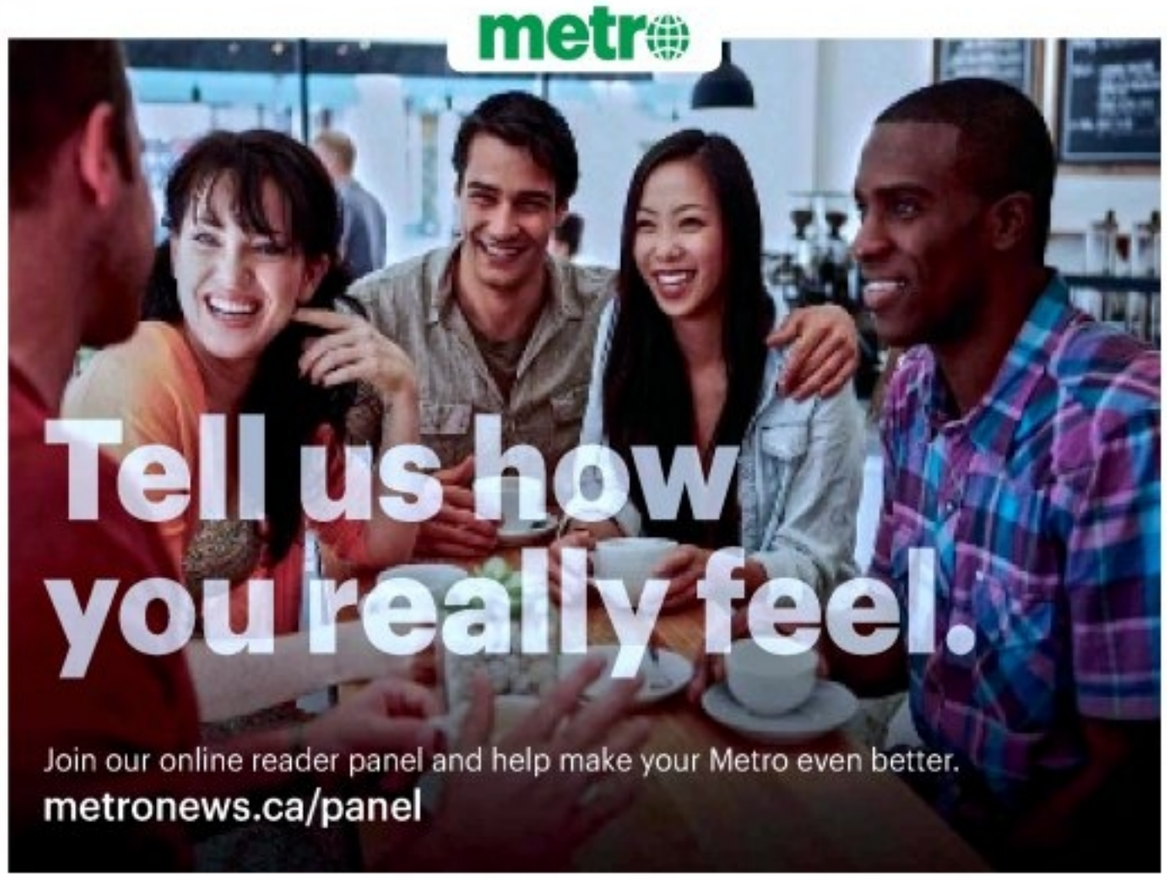
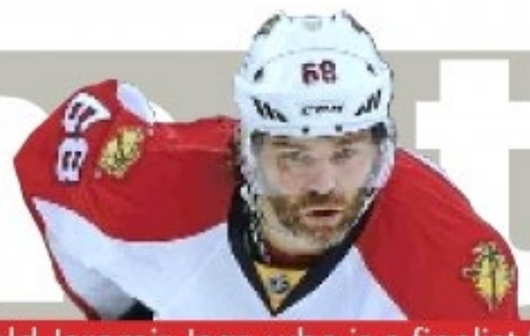


metro SPORTS



44-year-old Jaromir Jagr, who is a finalist for the Bill Masterton Memorial Trophy, has agreed to a one-year contract to return to the Panthers

Coaching merry-go-round 'spinning out of control'

NHL

Four teams including Ottawa without a head coach

Bob Hartley watched bosses come and go three times as coach of the Calgary Flames. He will need one more general manager to believe in him to stay in the NHL.

Fired Tuesday by the Flames, Hartley is itching to get back at it and he's not alone. The Anaheim Ducks' last two coaches, Bruce Boudreau and Randy Carlyle, are also in the mix for current vacancies. "Right now, the coaching carousel is spinning out of control," Hartley said. "It's the time of the year. So obviously there's lots of jobs, there's lots of names and there's going to be lots of speculations."

The Flames, Ducks, Minnesota Wild and Ottawa Senators all have openings. All four teams have different expectations for next season and beyond, and different requirements for their next head coach.

Anaheim is perhaps in the middle of its Stanley Cup window after winning four consecutive Pacific Division titles but failing to reach the final under Boudreau. GM Bob Murray dismissed Boudreau, citing "the way" the Ducks have been eliminated. A team with star forwards Ryan Getzlaf and Corey Perry, a bright young blue line and goaltender John Gibson is an attractive destination. Winning in the playoffs is the expectation.

Paul MacLean, who coached the Senators to two playoff appearances during three-plus seasons in Ottawa, was on Boudreau's staff this season, and former Edmonton Oilers coach Dallas Eakins took the American Hockey League's Toronto Marlies to the Calder Cup final in 2012. Then there's Carlyle, who won the Cup with the Ducks in 2007 and has been out of work since the Maple Leafs fired him in January 2015.

Minnesota has also made the playoffs four years in a row and is looking for more. GM Chuck Fletcher fired coach Mike Yeo and replaced him in February with interim John Torchetti, who is a candidate after a first-round exit. Fletcher flew to California, reportedly to meet with Boudreau, and is looking for a strong hockey person behind the bench. In some places, just consistently making the playoffs is the standard.

Calgary, meanwhile, needs a coach who will improve its special teams. Hartley, who won the Jack Adams Award as coach of the year last season, knows his power-play and penalty-killing units weren't good enough, but he sees the potential of forwards Sean Monahan and Johnny Gaudreau, and knows his successor will have success.

Like the Flames, the Senators made the playoffs against long odds in 2014-15 and fell backward in the standings this year, costing Dave Cameron his job. NHL head-coaching experience is a prerequisite, so Boudreau, Hartley, Yeo, Carlyle, Kevin Dineen, Marc Crawford and Guy Boucher are all legitimate candidates. Senators owner Eugene Melnyk said on Toronto's AM-590 that the team was down to its last couple of interviews. "It's gone well," Melnyk said.

"There's some great talent (available)." Hartley, Boudreau and MacLean have all been named coach of the year, Carlyle and Crawford have each won the Cup, and Dineen helped the Chicago Blackhawks win it as an assistant. THE CANADIAN PRESS WITH FILES FROM ASSOCIATED PRESS

Former Ottawa Senators head coach Dave Cameron was one of the casualties as four NHL coaches lost jobs at the end of the regular season. JANA CHYTILOVA/FREESTYLE PHOTOGRAPHY/GETTY IMAGES

> **It's the time of year. So obviously there's lots of jobs and there's going to be lots of speculation.**
> Bob Hartley

NHL

Coyotes' Chayka youngest GM ever

The Arizona Coyotes have made John Chayka the youngest general manager in NHL history and restructured their front office.

The 26-year-old Chayka was introduced as Arizona's next general manager on Thursday after serving one season as assistant GM to Don Maloney, who was fired in April after nine seasons.

Coach Dave Tippett also signed a five-year contract extension and will have added responsibilities in personnel decisions as executive vice-president of hockey operations.

Coyotes alternate governor Gary Drummond will now serve as president of hockey operations. Chayka joined the Coyotes prior to last season after co-founding the hockey analytics firm Stathletes in 2009. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Arizona Coyotes GM John Chayka THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NBA PLAYOFFS

Curry doubtful for Game 3 vs. Portland

Stephen Curry did not practice Thursday with the Golden State Warriors and is unlikely to play in Game 3 of the Western Conference semifinals at Portland.

Curry did some work on the court but has yet to scrimmage. Coach Steve Kerr said "probably not" when asked about Curry playing Saturday.

Kerr said, "Everything has gone very smoothly. He hasn't had any setbacks."

Defending champion Golden State leads the best-of-seven series against Portland 2-0. The Warriors had Wednesday off from practice after winning Game 2 on Tuesday night at Oracle Arena.

Curry injured his knee April 24 when he slipped on a wet spot just before halftime at Houston in the first round of the playoffs.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Go to metronews.ca for coverage of Heat-Raptors Game 2

NBA IN BRIEF

Wizards' Wall ready for next season after surgery

Washington Wizards all-star guard John Wall underwent left knee surgery and is expected to be ready for the start of next season.

The team said Wall had a procedure done to remove calcium deposits in his left knee to eliminate pain and help him heal more effectively. Wall's chances of playing in the 2016 Rio Olympics are likely over as a result. He was among the 30 finalists named for the US roster. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Pacers let Vogel go after 5 years and playoffs loss

Frank Vogel will not return as Indiana Pacers coach next season after a first-round playoff loss to the Toronto Raptors.

Pacers President Larry Bird says the team will not renew Vogel's contract for next season. Bird says he believes it's time for a new voice to lead the Pacers.

Vogel was 250-181 in five and a half seasons with the Pacers. He led the team to the playoffs five times. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

FORT MCMURRAY WILDFIRES

Alberta sport giants donate to Red Cross

Alberta's professional sports teams are contributing to relief efforts after raging wildfires forced the evacuation of tens of thousands of people from the city of Fort McMurray and other northern municipalities.

The NHL's Edmonton Oilers and Calgary Flames have each donated $100,000 to the Canadian Red Cross and have encouraged fans to make contributions. The league later announced it would also be donating $100,000 to the relief organization.

"The National Hockey League family stands with all who have been affected by the devastating fires in Fort McMurray," NHL commissioner Gary Bettman said in a statement. "We send thoughts of support and encouragement to our neighbors as they confront this disaster."

Meanwhile, the Edmonton Eskimos are spearheading a CFL initiative that includes a combined $50,000 donation to the Red Cross from all nine teams. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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RECIPE Oat and Banana Pancakes

PHOTO: MAYA VISNYEI

Ceri Marsh & Laura Keogh
For Metro Canada

You're not thinking about letting the Mom in your life make breakfast on Sunday, are you?

Ready in
Prep time: 5 minutes
Cook time: 15 minutes

Ingredients
- 1 cup old fashioned oats
- 1 cup spelt flour
- 1/4 brown sugar
- 1/2 tsp baking soda
- 1 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 2 eggs
- 3/4 cup milk
- 3/4 cup plain Greek-style yogurt
- 1/2 tsp vanilla extract
- 2 ripe bananas, mashed
- 1/2 cup dark chocolate chips
- 4 Tbsp butter

Directions

1. In a large mixing bowl, combine oats, flour sugar, baking soda, baking powder and cinnamon.

2. In a separate bowl, whisk eggs, milk, yogurt and vanilla. Combine yogurt mixture with dry ingredients and then fold in bananas.

3. Heat 1 tablespoon of butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Use a 1/4 cup measure to pour batter in your hot pan, leaving some space between pancakes in the skillet. Cook pancakes until bubbles appear on top and the underside is golden brown then flip and cook another 1 to 2 minutes. Add another tablespoon of butter to pan between batches and work until batter is finished.

4. Serve with warm maple syrup, agave or honey.

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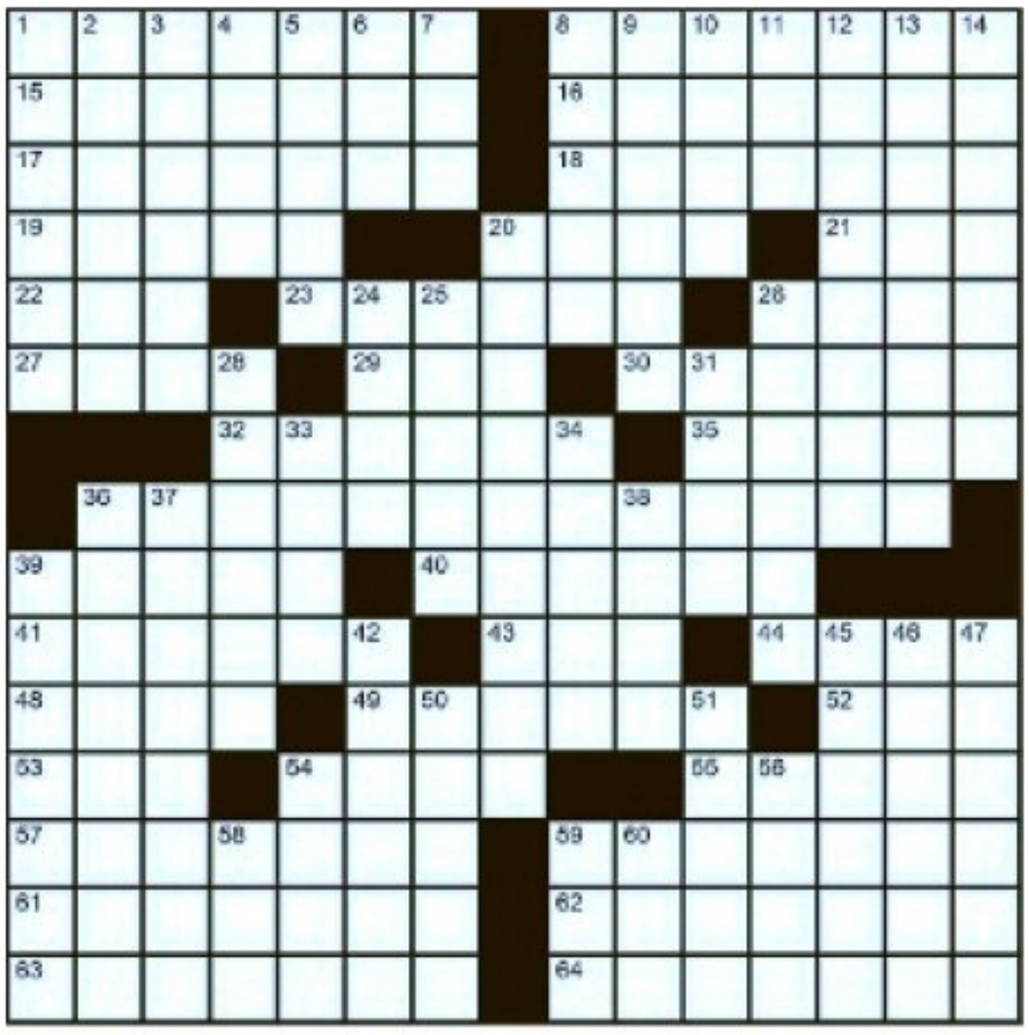
CROSSWORD Canada Across and Down

BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



ACROSS
1. Clearly expresses
8. Minstrel musicians
15. Mosque tower
16. Up the proverbial creek: 3 wds.
17. Autocratically
18. Potassium __
19. Handle
20. Advantages
21. Music style
22. Eliminate
23. Canucks (note the 's'), as opposed to Canuck
26. Assist
27. Acknowledged
29. Hot season in Montreal
30. "The Partridge Family" character played by Susan Dey
32. Biblical book/prophet
35. Canadian Politics: Nicknames of the Liberals
36. Famous event Canadian racehorse Northern Dancer won in 1964: 2 wds.
39. __ sock (Do darning)
40. Celine's "The Prayer" duettist
41. Pre-born social insect: 2 wds.
43. Canadian rapper, JD __
44. Disapproving sound
48. Munchies/treats, advertising-style
49. English class assignments
52. Comprehend
53. X
54. Captivating animal attractions
55. Fashion: __ couture
57. Port city in North Africa on the Mediterranean
59. Became full from the buffet
61. "Circle in the Sand" by __ Carlisle
62. Fixed the suit jacket in a way
63. Tonsil's pal
64. Wine storage rooms

DOWN
1. Set sail
2. Bow's instrument
3. Not outdoors
4. Spaceflight gr.
5. Crunchy
6. Snake-like splasher
7. Pen
8. The Balance
9. Get the newly-purchased rug ready for use
10. New Mexico art colony
11. Doctrine
12. Bible: Eve was created from one: 2 wds.
13. Wholeness
14. Grassy expanses on plains
20. As per #36-Across... The other big thoroughbred horse race Northern Dancer won in 1964, __ Stakes
24. French for 'the water'
25. Mohawk Valley city in New York
26. "Whoopee!"
28. Glass cleaning brand
31. Pulitzer-winning writer James
33. Male deer
34. Mythological multi-headed monster
36. Put the dogs in a boarding shelter, States-style
37. Mire
38. Sturdy horse cart
39. Flat-roofed tomb of ancient Egypt
42. Lieutenant Commander __ La Forge ('Star Trek' universe character)
45. The Night of the __ (Tennessee Williams play)
46. Jet-__ (World traveller)
47. War horses
50. "What a pity.": 2 wds.
51. Beach trinket
54. __ of Elea (Ancient Greek philosopher)
56. Seed coat
58. "Am __ your way?"
59. Legendary monster
60. Peace sign's spelled-out shape

IT'S ALL IN THE STARS Your daily horoscope by Francis Drake

Aries March 21 - April 20
Today is the best day of the year to take stock of what you own. Do your wealth and assets make your life easier? After all, that's the objective, isn't it?

Taurus April 21 - May 21
Take a realistic look in the mirror today to see how you can make a better impression on your world. (This is the best day of the year to do this.)

Gemini May 22 - June 21
For one more month, you must be patient with partners and close friends. After that, these relationships will be far less demanding.

Cancer June 22 - July 23
Friendships are important, whether you are an extrovert or an introvert. Actually, your friends are a reflection of who you are. Think about this today.

Leo July 24 - Aug. 23
Today's New Moon is the best day all year to observe your style of relating to authority figures — bosses, parents and VIPs. Are you gracious or competitive?

Virgo Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
What further education or training will help to improve your job? What travel might you do to enrich your life?

Libra Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
You will have greater peace of mind if you work to reduce your debt. This is the perfect day to think about how to do this.

Scorpio Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
Scrutinize your partnerships and closest friendships today, because this is the best day of the year to do this. (That's because today is the only New Moon opposite your sign all year.)

Sagittarius Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
What can you do to improve your job or the way that you do your job? The whole point of efficiency is to make things easier for you.

Capricorn Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
"No pain, no gain" is a Capricorn belief. But in truth, we all need to play every day! Do you balance play with work? Think about this today.

Aquarius Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
Think of several ways that you might improve your home, as well as your relationships with family members. Today's New Moon is the best day of the year to think about this.

Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
It's important to be as clear as you can in all your communications with others. Observe your style of communicating. Do you really listen to others, or do you just wait for a chance to speak?

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU by Dave Green

Every row, column and box contains 1-9

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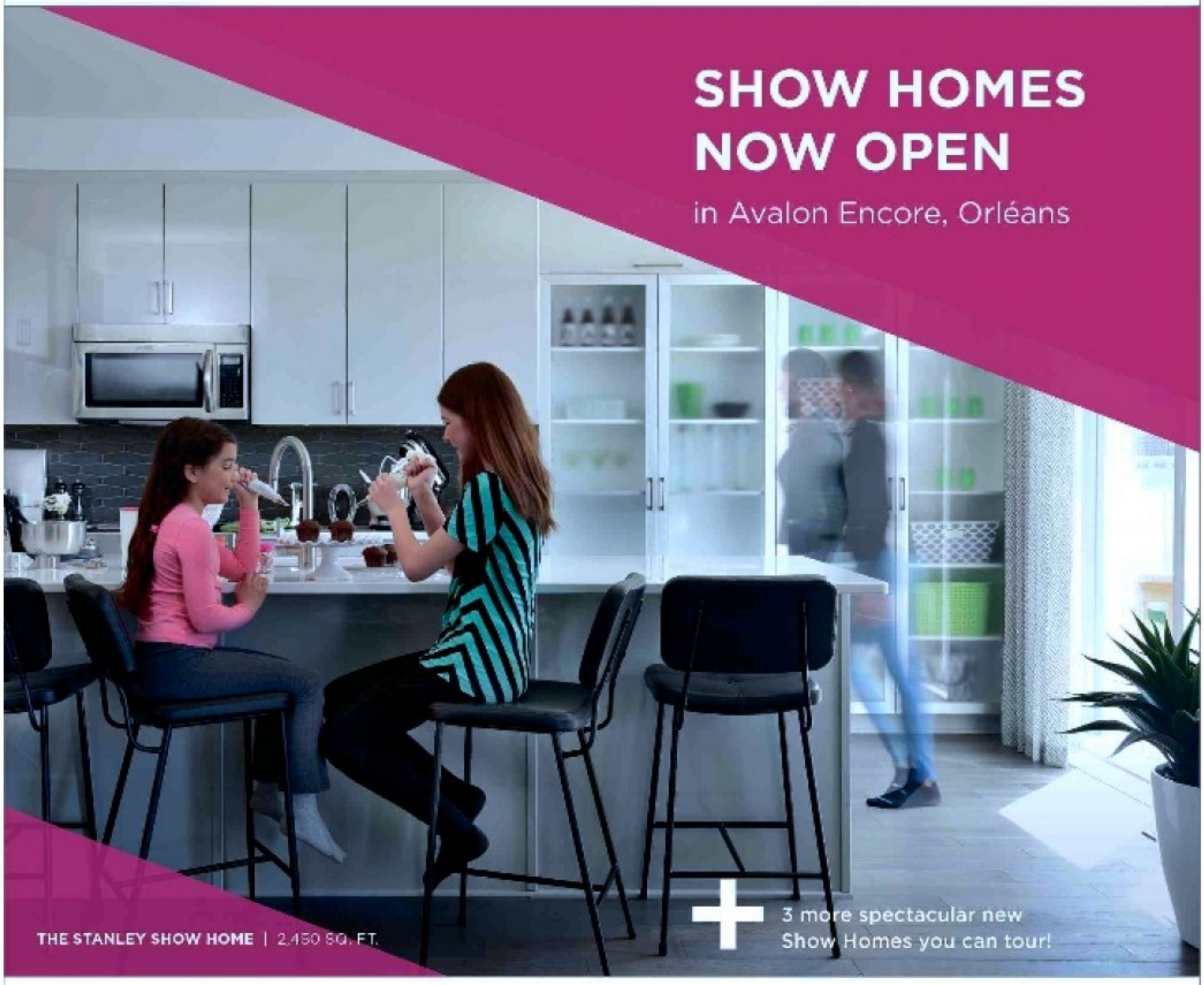

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